

**04 August 2017**

**Press Statement**

**Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak in South Africa**

An outbreak of H5N8 highly pathogenic avian influenza has been reported by Astral Foods Limited (Astral) on a farm owned by the company in Standerton, in the Lekwa District Municipality in Mpumalanga.

The Welbedacht Farm is a breeder Farm with 48 houses and one of the houses was said to have infected birds. The farm has been quarantined and the National and Provincial Departments of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries have implemented the required control measures.

This brings the number of outbreaks on commercial farms over the past few weeks to five (5). Despite this, the birds affected are still a very small percentage of the total South African chicken flock with very limited impact on the supply of poultry products. In 2016 South Africa produced approximately 1 billion broilers and approximately 8 billion eggs (24 million hens). The eggs grossed approximately R10 billion and broilers approximately R37 billion.

Despite the disease having affected countries in Europe, Asia as well as the United States of America since 2014 this series of outbreaks over the past few weeks is the first time the disease has been isolated in the country. The South African Poultry Association (SAPA) through the Poultry Disease Management Agency (PDMA) continues to monitor the situation closely and will continue to engage with DAFF and other relevant stakeholders such as the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA) on control measures for the disease.

Consumers are reminded that this strain has been found not to be dangerous to humans and this has been confirmed by the World Health Organisation and the World Organisation for Animal Health. The meat and eggs that are on the shelves are safe to eat as they have gone through a process of inspection and certified fit for human consumption.

We request utmost cooperation of all affected parties in order to prevent further spread of the current outbreak and enhance the disease management efforts. Producers are once again urged to remain vigilant and ensure that biosecurity measures are adhered to, to reduce the risk of infection.

The public are requested to report any sightings of wild bird or backyard chicken mortalities.